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DEPARTMENT FOR INL AND EUR/WE

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TAGS: SNAR PREL PGOV SP

SUBJECT: SPAIN: INL ACTING A/S SCHWEICH BRIEFS SPANISH  
OFFICIALS ON U.S. COUNTERNARCOTICS STRATEGY IN AFGHANISTAN  
AND LATIN AMERICA

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Classified By: DCM Hugo Llorens for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. During an October 9 visit to Madrid, Acting Assistant Secretary of State for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) Thomas Schweich met with representatives from the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Intelligence Center Against Organized Crime (CICO). AA/S Schweich briefed his Spanish counterparts on the 2007 U.S. Counternarcotics Strategy for Afghanistan, and also discussed with his Spanish hosts our evolving counterdrug and law enforcement programs in Colombia, Mexico, and Central America. AA/S Schweich conveyed our concerns about narcotics trends in Bolivia, and the Spanish said they shared this assessment. Schweich had last visited Madrid in October 2006 (REFTEL), and on this trip he noted the progress that Spain has made over the past year on the counternarcotics front, including the hosting of the successful International Drug Enforcement Conference (IDEC) in May 2007, and increased cooperation with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration. AA/S Schweich discussed the need for allied countries to contribute funding to counternarcotics programs in Afghanistan and to help build counternarcotics capacity in Latin America. The Spanish government knows it faces serious challenges on the narcotics front and our interlocutors indicated that they would continue to pursue a robust relationship with this Embassy and U.S. law enforcement agencies. END SUMMARY.

//AFGHANISTAN//

¶2. (C) AA/S Schweich visited Madrid in the latest in a series of visits to EU capitals to brief allies on the new U.S. strategy for counternarcotics and justice sector reform in Afghanistan. Many in the Spanish government share the misperception that our policy is "all stick and no carrot," and AA/S Schweich took this opportunity to educate his counterparts on the U.S.'s balanced strategy, including an enhanced public information campaign, more consistent international messaging, greater assistance for alternative development, a doubling of funds for interdiction, and a policy of non-negotiated forced eradication. At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Schweich met with Carlos Morales Sanchez,

Deputy Director General (PDAS equivalent) for Continental Asia, and Ambassador Jose Luis Solano, MFA Special Advisor on Afghanistan. Ambassador Solano spent a year in Afghanistan helping establish Spain's Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Herat. AA/S Schweich began the meeting by discussing the previous day's New York Times article on U.S. counternarcotics efforts in Afghanistan. By chance, Director Morales had read the article that morning. Morales noted that the article referenced the new U.S. strategy and was therefore very pleased when Schweich handed him a hard copy. He assured Schweich that he would read it closely and contact the Embassy if he had any questions. The MFA team listened closely to Ambassador Schweich's briefing and paid particular interest to the color-coded map indicating province-by-province changes in opium cultivation between 2006 and 2007. The Spanish noted the increase in cultivation in the western province of Herat, home of the Spanish PRT, and were struck by the fact that cultivation has disappeared from 13 northern provinces while simultaneously increasing significantly in the south, demonstrating increasing links between poppy cultivation and insecurity.

¶3. (C) The MFA Afghanistan team said that while their information indicated that narcotics were becoming more of a problem in the west of Afghanistan, their perception is that Afghan political will remains the key factor in determining counternarcotics success or failure. They asked AA/S Schweich for his views on the competence and honesty of the Afghan Ministries of Counternarcotics and Interior. Schweich replied that the Ministry of Counternarcotics is for the moment "less capable, but less corrupt" than the Ministry of Interior, while Interior is "more capable, but more corrupt." The MFA team noted that the only alternative development available in Herat is "pistachios, watermelons, and onions," and expressed concern that if ISAF cracks down on drugs in Helmand Province, it will likely be only a matter of time

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before narcotics producers and traffickers focus their attention westward. The Spanish expressed apprehension over the possibility of Afghanistan developing narco-insurgency links as deeply embedded as those in Colombia. Director Morales listened intently to Schweich's recapitulation of U.S. policy on non-negotiated forced eradication, but then asked what comes after eradication. AA/S Schweich responded that eradication must be preceded, accompanied, and followed by robust public information and alternative livelihood campaigns that make the risk of eradication clear, emphasize the importance of rule of law, and provide viable income alternatives to growers. Morales also inquired whether the U.S. would meet with Iranian officials to ensure that Afghanistan's western region does not develop the same problems occurring in the south. Schweich replied that while we do not deal directly with Iran, we engage with others who do. The meeting ended with discussion of Afghanistan's Counter-Narcotics Trust Fund (CNTF) and Director Morales said UK government pressure on the GOS precipitated a recent Spanish contribution of 150,000 euros.

//LATIN AMERICA//

¶4. (C) AA/S Schweich also briefed Spanish counterparts on evolving U.S. counternarcotics strategies in Latin America. He met with Javier Sandomingo, MFA Director General for Latin America (WHA A/S equivalent), and a senior-level team from Spain's Intelligence Center Against Organized Crime (CICO). CICO has the GOS lead on liaison counternarcotics efforts in Latin America and was the driving force behind Spain's successful hosting of the May 2007 International Drug Enforcement Conference (IDEC), the first time the conference has been held outside of the western hemisphere. CICO Director Maria Marcos Salvador was away on official travel and therefore unable to meet with Schweich, but she instructed her team to offer to cooperate fully with our counter-drug efforts in Latin America, a region of extreme importance to Spain. AA/S Schweich described for his Spanish

counterparts the changes currently being effected to our programs in Colombia as a result of shifting U.S. Congressional priorities. He stressed that Colombia is our strongest ally in the Andes and we have no plans to abandon counternarcotics support for that country. Colombia may nationalize some of our current programs and there may be a small cut in overall Congressional funding as more emphasis shifts to "soft side" efforts and away from aerial eradication. Finally, Schweich noted our increasing concerns about the narcotics situation in Bolivia.

¶ 15. (C) Director General Sandomingo was very interested in the follow-on to Plan Colombia. He said that Plan Colombia had not been popular among some left-wing constituencies in the governing coalition of Spanish President Zapatero, but that the MFA fully supported our efforts to achieve a Free Trade Agreement with Colombia, and had in fact lobbied Capitol Hill to this effect. He stressed that Mexico was a priority for the Spanish government and expressed interest in collaborating with the U.S. on any efforts to build or improve the capacity of their counter-narcotics institutions.

In response, Schweich made a very general reference to the planned U.S. assistance package for Mexico. On Bolivia, Sandomingo agreed with our assessment on the failure of Morales' policy of "Yes to coca, no to cocaine" policy, but took a bit of a softer stand on the Bolivian president. He said the GOS has an "uneasy" relationship with Bolivia (due primarily to disputes over Spanish economic interests), but views the Morales government as "incompetent," not malicious.

Describing Morales as a better choice than the conceivable alternatives, he urged us to have more patience with Morales: instead of dismissing him as a renegade, we must redouble our efforts to convince him that it is not in his long-term interest to allow rampant coca production in Bolivia. The Spanish MFA and CICO jointly-run a center in Santa Cruz, Bolivia that may provide opportunities for us to work together to influence Morales. On Mexico, Sandomingo expressed his belief that President Calderon was not aware upon taking office just how pervasive was the influence of narcotraffickers was in his country.

¶ 16. (C) CICO officials thanked AA/S Schweich for the detailed  
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presentation and said they were very interested in our public diplomacy strategy against narcotics, both in Afghanistan and in Latin America. CICO Deputy Director Felix de la Riva said that our countries could emphasize the ecological destruction that arises from narcotics production, and highlight to the public that many global terrorist groups (including the cell that carried out the Madrid train bombings on March 11, 2004) are financed through the illicit drug trade. The Spanish government is very worried about the growing nexus between terrorists and drug traffickers, and highlighted the case of the Barcelona area, a drug-trafficking hub where some 60,000 Pakistani immigrants, mostly male and in Spain without family members, have arrived in recent years. De la Riva described for Ambassador Schweich the cooperation agreements that Spain has with every Spanish-speaking country in Latin America and said that there are already existing avenues for engagement on counter-narcotics cooperation that should be better utilized. CICO has a liaison presence in Colombia and Mexico, but recent reorganizations have weakened ties to these countries.

//COMMENT//

¶ 17. (C) AA/S Schweich's stop over in Madrid followed on the heels of visits from JIATF-S Director Admiral Nimmich and SOUTHCOM Commander Admiral Stavridis, and provided another important opportunity to educate the Spanish on USG efforts to fight narcotics trafficking. We see eye-to-eye with the Spanish government on counternarcotics issues and will look to build on momentum from the successful IDEC conference to encourage Spain to take a lead role in the counternarcotics fight both in Europe and Latin America. We would welcome

another trip from AA/S Schweich in the future to discuss USG strategies in Afghanistan and Latin America, and we also suggest a visit to the newly-opened Maritime Analysis and Operations Center (MAOC) in Lisbon to gain a first-hand look at innovative strategies Europeans are employing to stem the flow of narcotics arriving on their shores.

**¶8. (U) Acting A/S Schweich cleared this cable.  
AGUIRRE**